

February 11, 1999

DEFENSE POLICY POINTS

- **GOP Priorities: the Protection of Our Soldiers and of Our Citizens —** Republicans have always supported a strong national defense. It was, after all, “peace through strength” that was largely responsible for the United States winning the Cold War.
- **The President Has Neglected the Military for Six Years —** The robust military and strong morale of the Reagan-Bush era has been frittered away by six years of a Clinton Administration that has simultaneously underfunded our military while deploying U.S. forces overseas to support an ill-conceived foreign policy.
 - During the Clinton era, defense spending has fallen 25 percent in real economic terms while other federal spending has grown by 16 percent.
 - Top military officials recently identified some \$148 billion in hard military requirements. The Administration’s budget provides less than \$90 billion to meet them.
 - The Administration is being disingenuous in claiming that defense spending will increase by \$12.6 billion this year. That’s bogus since only \$4.1 billion is new money; the remaining \$8.5 billion comes from uncertain funding sources and budget gimmicks: low oil prices, low inflation, and foreign currency exchange rates.
 - Meanwhile, the President has stressed our military to the breaking point, using U.S. troops abroad 45 times. This has created a readiness crisis: our soldiers are being sent on back-to-back deployments, our aging equipment has not been modernized, and we’re being forced to cannibalize aircraft.
- **And, Still He Won’t Protect Americans —** As the ballistic missile threat continues to grow, this Administration refuses to deploy a missile defense system to protect American citizens. Its plan delays deployment decisions until 2000.
 - The threat of unauthorized or accidental launches from Russia or China is real, and evidence of threats from rogue nations is growing.

- And what of the missiles our intelligence sources miss? A bipartisan Commission (the Rumsfeld Commission) concluded that we may have little or no warning before a country's ballistic missiles become operational.
- Today, if a country launched a ballistic missile against the United States, there is nothing we can do. Such a threat now exists, and will become more pronounced in the future [see RPC paper, "Recent Events Prove the Need for National Missile Defense," 9/3/98].
- **Republicans Say Protect Americans Against Ballistic Missile Attack —** Republicans understand the threat and need to defend Americans from ballistic missile attack. That's why our top priority — within the next few weeks — is passage of the National Missile Defense Act of 1999.
 - This bill makes it U.S. policy to deploy, as soon as technologically possible, an effective national missile defense system that can defend the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack. It wouldn't matter whether these attacks were accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate.
- **We Will Reverse Negative Trends in Recruitment and Retention—** Our top military leaders have testified repeatedly about recruitment goals not being met and about a large number of critical personnel leaving the military early. Our men and women in uniform make the ultimate sacrifice. Yet today's soldiers have long faced:
 - a growing pay gap between the military and civilians; and
 - an inflexible retirement plan.
- Republicans will — later this month — begin to reverse these negative trends. S. 4, The Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999:
 - **Authorizes a 4.8-percent military pay raise in January 2000.** This helps close the pay gap between the military and civilian sector. For close to 20 years, military pay raises have been less than those in the civilian sector.
 - **Allows service members retirement options.** After 15 years of service, they may opt for a lump sum bonus to stay in the current system of 40 percent of base pay or they may return to the 50-percent formula. This incentive is aimed at retaining mid-career personnel on active duty.
 - **Allows service members to participate in the Thrift Savings Plan.** This program is currently available to federal civil service employees.

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